

Introduction to

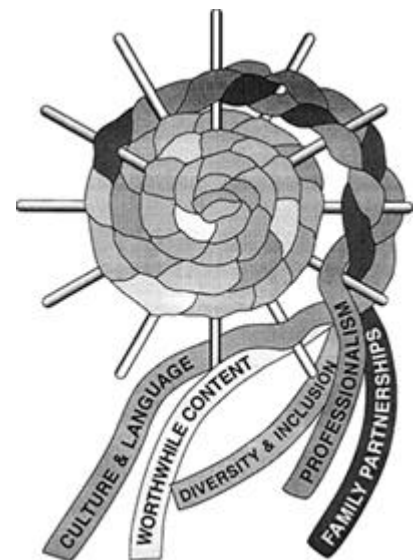
The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland

In times past, educating children was generally seen as relatively straightforward—a matter of bringing together teachers and children with books and ideas. Over time, educators and the public have come to know that learning for human beings is a complex enterprise affected by a host of conditions related to the learner, the community, and the learning environment.

Before an educational need or approach is known, it is ignored. When it is discovered, it is often considered separately. When it is more fully understood, it can be integrated in the whole of the life of the classroom. An example has been the education of children with disabilities. Before the 1970s, children with disabilities were often excluded from public schools; even when they finally secured access to public education, it was often a separate classroom. Today it is more common to find most children receiving the special services they may need in the context of an age-based grouping and more frequently within the physical space of the classroom.

In the first edition of *The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland*, separate chapters were developed or maintained for several areas of service or curriculum. The authors of this edition believe that the field has moved beyond that approach—that it is time to approach the organization of teaching and learning for all children in the way that it is now understood that they learn best—in an integrated and inclusive fashion. For that reason, content related both to differences among learners and to emergent areas of curriculum is presented within the entire text of the second edition of *The Primary Program*. This integration, or weaving together of ideas and strategies, is represented by the graphic shown here—a complex weaving—strands woven together and woven again into a whole.

This model is intended as mental model for users of the document. A mental model that is helpful as a visual reminder of a complex set of ideas.



The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland is a research based curriculum framework that will assist practitioners in becoming more consciously competent in their work with young children. *The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland* can help practitioners to:

Develop Self-knowledge

- To confirm and communicate why you use certain practices in your daily work with children
- To expand the knowledge base
- To identify resources for early education
- To continuously improve daily teaching practices

Achieve Perspective

- To identify challenging but achievable student learning goals across the curriculum and across grade levels
- To develop a common vision, mission, or learning goals for school boards, districts, center staff, or grade level groups
- To appreciate learning goals that cross content areas and mutually reinforce learning
- To provide a common knowledge base and language for school improvement efforts

Better Define Early Childhood Education

- To focus on the uniqueness of the child from birth through age eight years
- To recognize the widely-held expectations of development for this age group
- To maximize the interrelationships of learning for young children
- To convey the value of student ownership in learning and motivation

Interpret and Apply Research

- To understand the relevance of research to the teaching and learning process
- To apply research findings in meaningful and relevant ways
- To use the principles of child development
- To clarify the relationship between curriculum, assessment, and instruction
- To study and learn with colleagues



Empathize

- To understand and celebrate the energy and wonder of young children
- To understand the process of inquiry
- To create safe and respectful learning environments
- To respect the culture, language, and development of each child

The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland will:

- Provide discussion topics for staff meetings
- Guide self-assessment
- Identify resources and references
- Make connections across content areas
- Affirm that all children learn with support and challenges
- Identify the value of standards
- Clarify the purpose of assessment
- Guide assessment and evaluation decisions
- Provide a roadmap for individual, program, and school journeys
- Suggest goals that reflect developmentally appropriate practices
- Provide Widely-Held Expectations for children from birth through age 13 years
- Reflect child development principles
- Support comprehensive school improvement

